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Van Dyke
NBI

1. Poetry (American)

THE TOILING OF FELIX AND OTHER POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The House of Rimmon. $1.00 *net.*

Music and Other Poems. $1.00 *net.*

The Toiling of Felix and Other Poems. $1.00.

The Builders and Other Poems. $1.00.

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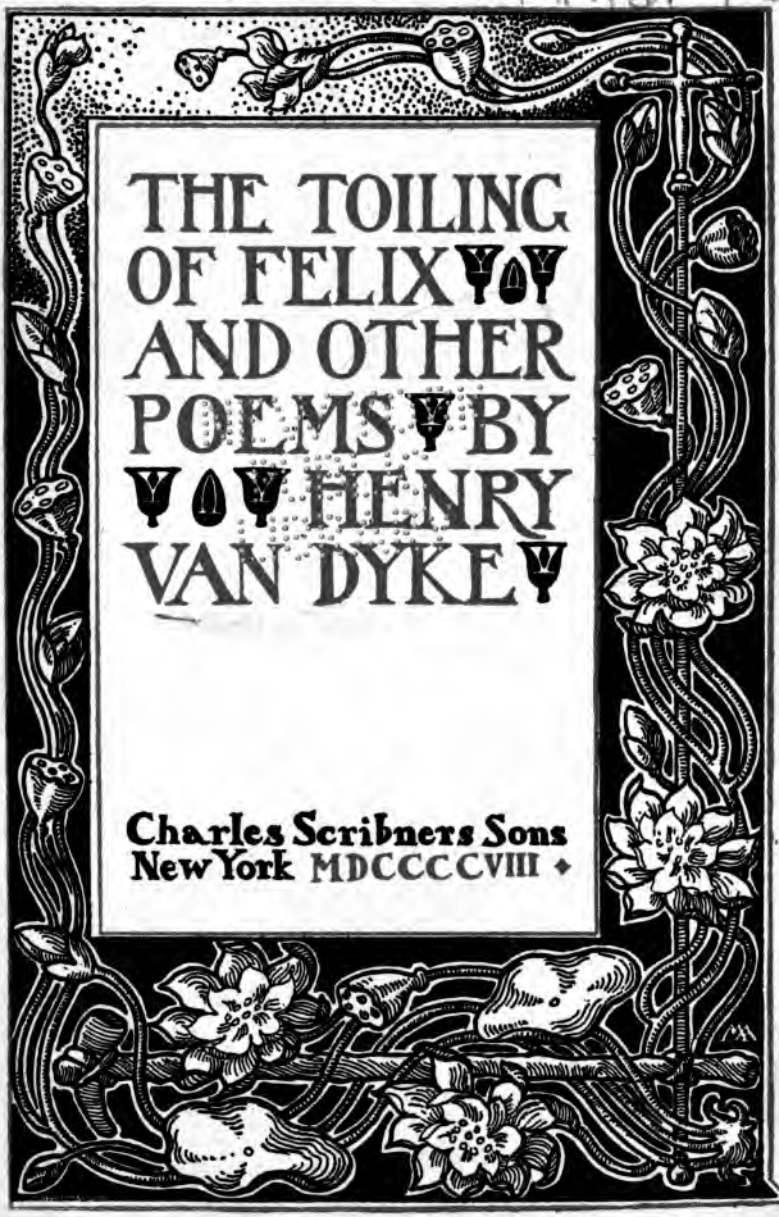

E.W.

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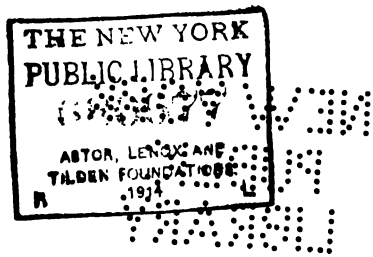

IN the rubbish heaps of the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, near the river Nile, a party of English Explorers, in the winter of 1897, discovered a fragment of a papyrus book, written in the Second or Third Century, and hitherto unknown. This single leaf contained parts of seven short sentences of Christ, each introduced by the words, "Jesus says:" It is to the fifth of these Sayings of Jesus that the following poem refers.

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THE TOILING OF FELIX

A LEGEND

ON A NEW SAYING OF JESUS

PRELUDE

A LOST WORD OF JESUS

HEAR a word that Jesus spake
Eighteen centuries ago,
Where the crimson lilies blow
Round the blue Tiberian lake:
There the bread of life he brake,
Through the fields of harvest walking
With His lowly comrades, talking
Of the secret thoughts that feed
Weary hearts in time of need.
Art thou hungry? Come and take;
Hear the word that Jesus spake:
'T is the sacrament of labour; meat and drink
divinely blest;
Friendship's food, and sweet refreshment;
strength and courage, joy and rest.

Yet this word the Master said,
Long ago and far away,
Silent and forgotten lay
Buried with the silent dead, —
Where the sands of Egypt spread,
Sea-like, tawny billows heaping
Over ancient cities sleeping;
While the River Nile between
Rolls its summer flood of green,
Rolls its autumn flood of red,—
There the word the Master said,
Written on a frail papyrus, scorched by fire, wrinkled, torn,
Hidden in God's hand, was waiting for its resurrection morn.

Hear the Master's risen word!
Delving spades have set it free,—
Wake! the world has need of thee,—
Rise, and let thy voice be heard,
Like a fountain disinterred,
Upward springing, singing, sparkling;
Through the doubtful shadows darkling;
Till the clouds of pain and rage
Brooding o'er the toiling age,
As with rifts of light are stirred
By the music of the Word;
Gospel for the heavy-laden, answer to the labourer's cry;
"Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and there am I."

LEGEND

THE TOILING OF FELIX

LISTEN, ye who look for Jesus, long to see
Him close to you,
To a legend of this saying; how one tried, and
found it true.

Born in Egypt, 'neath the shadow of the crum-
bling gods of night,
He forsook the ancient darkness, turned his
young heart toward the Light.

Felix was the name they gave him, when his
faith was first confessed;
But the name was unavailing, for his life was
yet unblessed.

Seeking Christ, in vain he waited for the vision
of the Lord;
Vainly pondered all the volumes where the
creeds of men were stored;

Vainly shut himself in silence, keeping vigil
night and day;
Vainly haunted shrines and churches where
the Christians came to pray.

One by one he dropped the duties of the com-
mon life of care;
Broke the human ties that bound him; laid his
spirit waste and bare;

Hoping that the Lord would enter to that
empty dwelling-place,
And reward the loss of all things with the
vision of His face.

Still the blessed vision tarried; still the light
was unrevealed;
Still the Master, dim and distant, kept His
countenance concealed.

Fainter grew the hope of finding, wearier grew
the fruitless quest;
Prayer, and penitence, and fasting gave no
comfort, brought no rest.

In the darkness of the temple, ere the lamp of
faith went out,
Felix knelt before the altar — lonely, sad, and
full of doubt.

"Hear me, O thou mighty Master," from the
altar-step he cried,
"Let my one desire be granted, let my hope
be satisfied!

"Only once I long to see thee, in the fulness of
Thy grace:
Break the clouds that now enfold Thee, with
the sunrise of Thy face!

"All that men desire and treasure have I
counted loss for Thee;
Every task have I forsaken, save this one —
my Lord to see.

"Loosed the sacred bands of friendship, soli-
tary stands my heart;
Thou shalt be my sole companion when I see
Thee as Thou art.

"From Thy distant throne in glory, flash upon
my inward sight,
Fill the midnight of my spirit with the splendour of Thy light.

"All Thine other gifts and blessings, common
mercies, I disown;
Separated from my brothers, I would see Thy
face alone.

"Let them toil and pray together, let them win
earth's best reward,
This shall be my only glory — I alone have
seen the Lord.

"I have watched and I have waited as one
watcheth for the morn:
Still Thou hidest in the heavens, still Thou
leavest me forlorn.

"Now I seek Thee in the desert, where the
holy hermits dwell;
There, beside the saint Serapion, I will find a
lonely cell.

"There at last Thou wilt be gracious; there
Thy presence, long-concealed,
In the solitude and silence to my heart shall
stand revealed.

"Thou shalt come, at morn or even, o'er the
rolling waves of sand;
I shall see Thee close beside me, I shall touch
Thy pierced hand.

"Lo, Thy pilgrim kneels before Thee; bless
my journey with a word;
Tell me now that, if I follow, I shall find Thee,
O my Lord!"

Felix listened: through the darkness, like the
whispering of the wind,
Came a secret voice in answer: "Seek aright,
and thou shalt find."

Long and toilsome was his pathway through
the heavy land of heat,
Egypt's blazing sun above him, blistering sands
beneath his feet.

Still he plodded slowly onward, step by step
and mile by mile,
Till he reached the rugged mountain, beetling
high above the Nile,

Where the birds of air assemble, once a year,
their noisy flocks,
Then, departing, leave their sentinel perched
among the barren rocks.

Far away, on wings of gladness, over land and
sea they fly;
But the watcher on the summit lonely stands
against the sky.

There the eremite Serapion in a cave had made
his bed;
There the bands of wandering pilgrims sought
his blessing, brought him bread.

Month by month, in deep seclusion, hidden in
the rocky cleft,
Dwelt the hermit, fasting, praying; once a year
the cave he left.

On that day, one happy pilgrim, chosen out of
all the land,
Won a special sign of favour from the holy
hermit's hand.

Underneath the narrow window, at the door-
way closely sealed,
While the afterglow of sunset deepened round
him, Felix kneeled.

"Man of God, of men most holy — thou whose
gifts cannot be priced! —
Grant me thy most precious guerdon; tell me
how to find the Christ."

Breathless, Felix bowed and listened, but no
answering voice he heard;
Darkness folded, dumb and deathlike, round the
Mountain of the Bird.

Then he said, "The saint is silent — he would
teach my soul to wait;
I will tarry here in patience, like a beggar at
his gate."

So the companies of pilgrims, clambering up
the rocky stair,
Found the lonely, voiceless stranger by the
window, lost in prayer,

Never moving from his station, watching there
without complaint, —
Soon they came to call him holy, fed him as
they fed the saint.

Day by day he saw the sunrise flood the distant
plain with gold,
While the River Nile beneath him, silvery
coiling, seaward rolled.

Night by night he saw the planets range their
glittering court on high,
Saw the moon, with regal motion, mount her
throne and rule the sky.

Morn advanced and midnight fled, in visionary
pomp attired ;
Never morn and never midnight brought the
vision long-desired.

Now at last the day is dawning when Serapion
makes his gift;
Felix kneels before the threshold, hardly dares
his eyes to lift.

Now the cavern door uncloses, now the saint
above him stands,
Blesses him without a word, and leaves a token
in his hands.

'T is the guerdon of thy waiting — look! thou
happy pilgrim, look! —
Nothing but a tattered fragment of an old papy-
rus book.

Read! perchance the clue to guide thee tangled
in the words may lie:
*"Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the
wood, and there am I."*

Can it be the mighty Master spake such simple
words as these?
Can it be that men must seek Him, at their
toil, 'mid rocks and trees?

Disappointed, heavy-hearted, from the Mountain of the Bird
Felix mournfully descended, questioning the Master's word.

Not for him a sacred dwelling, far above the haunts of men:
He must turn his footsteps backward to the common life again.

From a quarry by the river, hollowed out below the hills,
Rose the clattering voice of labour, clanking hammers, clinking drills.

Dust, and noise, and hot confusion made a Babel of the spot:
There, among the lowliest workers, Felix sought and found his lot.

Now he swung the ponderous mallet, smote the iron in the rock —
Muscles quivering, tingling, throbbing — blow on blow and shock on shock;

Now he drove the willow wedges, wet them till
they swelled and split,
With their silent strength, the fragment — sent
it thundering down the pit.

Now the groaning tackle raised it; now the roll-
ers made it slide;
Harnessed men, like beasts of burden, drew it
to the river-side.

Now the palm-trees must be riven, massive
timbers hewn and dressed —
Rafts to bear the stones in safety on the rushing
river's breast.

Axe and auger, saw and chisel, wrought the will
of man in wood:
'Mid the many-handed labour Felix toiled, and
found it good.

Every day the blood ran fleeter through his
limbs and round his heart;
Every night his sleep was sweeter, knowing he
had done his part.

Dreams of solitary saintship faded from him; but, instead,
Came a sense of daily comfort, in the toil for daily bread.

Far away, across the river, gleamed the white walls of the town
Whither all the stones and timbers, day by day, were drifted down.

There the workman saw his labour taking form and bearing fruit,
Like a tree with splendid branches rising from a humble root.

Looking at the distant city, temples, houses, domes, and towers,
Felix cried in exultation: "All the mighty work is ours.

"Every mason in the quarry, every builder on the shore,
Every chopper in the palm-grove, every raftsman at the oar —

"Hewing wood and drawing water, splitting stones and cleaving sod —
All the dusty ranks of labour, in the regiment of God,

"March together toward His triumph, do the task His hands prepare:
Honest toil is holy service; faithful work is praise and prayer."

So through all the heat and burden Felix felt the sense of rest
Flowing softly, like a fountain, deep within his weary breast.

Felt the brotherhood of labour, rising round him like the tide,
Overflow his heart, and join him to the workers at his side.

Oft he cheered them with his singing at the breaking of the light,
Told them tales of Christ at nooning, taught them words of prayer at night.

So he felt the Master's presence drawing
closer all the while:
Though the Master's face was hidden, yet he
knew it wore a smile.

Once he bent above a comrade fainting in the
mid-day heat,
Sheltered him with woven palm-leaves, gave
him water, cool and sweet.

Then it seemed, for one swift moment, secret
radiance filled the place;
Underneath the green palm-branches flashed
one look of Jesus' face.

Once again, a raftsman, slipping, plunged be-
neath the stream and sank;
Swiftly Felix leaped to rescue — caught him,
drew him toward the bank —

Battling with the cruel river, using all his
strength to save —
Did he dream? or was there One beside him
walking on the wave?

Now at last the work was ended; grove deserted, quarry stilled,
Felix journeyed to the city that his hands had helped to build.

In the darkness of the temple, at the closing hour of day,
Once again he sought the altar, once again he knelt to pray:

"Hear me, O Thou hidden Master; Thou hast sent a word to me;
It is written — Thy commandment. I have kept it. Look and see.

"Thou hast bid me leave the visions of the solitary life;
Bear my part in human labour; take my share in human strife.

"I have done Thy bidding, Master; raised the rock and felled the tree;
Swung the axe and plied the hammer, working every day for Thee.

"Once it seemed I saw Thy presence through
the bending palm-leaves gleam;
Once upon the flowing water — Nay, I know not
— 't was a dream!

"This I know: Thou hast been near me: more
than this I dare not ask.
Though I see Thee not, I love Thee. Let me
do Thy humblest task!"

Through the dimness of the temple slowly
dawned a mystic light;
There the Master stood in glory, manifest to
mortal sight:

Hands that bore the mark of labour, brow that
bore the print of care;
Hands of power, divinely tender; brow of light,
divinely fair.

"Hearken, good and faithful servant, true dis-
ciple, loyal friend!
Thou hast followed Me and found Me; I will
keep thee to the end.

"Well I know thy toil and trouble. Often
weary, fainting, worn,
I have lived the life of labour, heavy burdens I
have borne.

"Never in a prince's palace have I slept on
golden bed,
Never in a hermit's cavern have I eaten un-
earned bread.

"Born within a lowly stable, where the cattle
round Me stood,
Trained a carpenter in Nazareth, I have toiled,
and found it good.

"They who tread the path of labour follow
where My feet have trod;
They who work without complaining do the
holy will of God.

"Where the many toil together, there am I
among My own;
Where the tired workman sleepeth, there am I
with him alone.

"I, the peace that passeth knowledge, dwell
amid the daily strife;
I, the bread of heaven, am broken in the sacra-
ment of life.

"Every task, however simple, sets the soul that
does it free;
Every deed of love and mercy, done to man, is
done to Me.

"Thou hast learned the peaceful secret; thou
hast come to Me for rest;
With thy burden, in thy labour, thou art Felix,
doubly blest.

"Nevermore thou needest seek Me; I am with
thee everywhere;
Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave
the wood, and I am there."

ENVOY

THE GOSPEL OF LABOUR

THE legend of Felix is ended, the toiling of Felix is done;
The Master has paid him his wages, the goal of his journey is won;
He rests, but he never is idle; a thousand years pass like a day,
In the glad surprise of that Paradise where work is sweeter than play.

But I think the King of that country comes out from his tireless host,
And walks in this world of the weary, as if He loved it the most;
For here in the dusty confusion, with eyes that are heavy and dim,
He meets again the labouring men who are looking and longing for Him.

He cancels the curse of Eden, and brings them
a blessing instead:
Blessed are they that labour, for Jesus partakes
of their bread.
He puts His hand to their burdens, He enters
their homes at night:
Who does his best shall have as a guest the
Master of life and of light.

And courage will come with His presence, and
patience return at His touch,
And manifold sins be forgiven to those who love
Him much;
And the cries of envy and anger will change to
the songs of cheer,
For the toiling age will forget its rage when the
Prince of Peace draws near.

This is the gospel of labour — ring it, ye bells of
the kirk —
The Lord of Love came down from above, to
live with the men who work.
This is the rose that He planted, here in the
thorn-cursed soil —
Heaven is blest with perfect rest, but the bless-
ing of Earth is toil.

VERA

AN IDYLL
OF THE MYSTERY OF SOUND

VERA

I

A SILENT world, — yet full of vital joy
Uttered in movements manifold, and swift
Clear smiles that flashed across the face of things
Like sudden sunbeams of divine delight, —
A world of many sorrows too, made known
In fading flowers, and withering leaves, and dark
Tear-laden clouds, and tearless, clinging mists
That hung above the earth too sad to weep, —
A world of fluent change, and changeless flow,
And infinite suggestion of new thoughts,
Reflected in the mirror of the heart
With shifting colours and dissolving forms,
From dark to light and back again to dark, —
A world of many meanings but no words:
A silent world was Vera's home.
For her
The hidden doors of sound were shut and sealed.
The outer portals, delicate as shells,
Suffused with faintest rose of far-off morn,
Like underglow of daybreak in the sea, —
The ear-gates of the garden of her soul,

Shaded by drooping tendrils of brown hair,
Waited in vain for messengers to pass,
And thread the inner paths with flying feet,
And swiftly knock upon the inmost doors,
And enter in, and speak the mystic word
To Vera, sitting there alone and listening.
But through those gates no message ever came:
Only with eyes did she behold and see, —
With eyes as crystal-clear and bright and brown
As waters of a woodland river, — eyes
That questioned so they almost seemed to speak,
And answered so they almost seemed to hear, —
Only with silent eyes did she behold
The inarticulate wonder of the world.

She saw the great wind ranging freely down
Interminable archways of the wood;
And tossing boughs and bending tree-tops hailed
His coming: but no sea-tuned voice of pines,
No roaring of the oaks, no silvery song
Of poplars or of birches, followed him:
He passed; they waved their arms and clapped their hands;
But all was still.

The torrents from the hills
Leaped down their rocky stairways, like wild steeds
Breaking the yoke and shaking manes of foam.
The lowland brooks coiled smoothly through the fields,
And softly spread themselves in glistening lakes
Whose ripples merrily danced among the reeds.
The standing waves that never change their place
In the swift rapids, curled upon themselves,
And seemed about to break and never broke;
And all the wandering waves that fill the sea
Came buffeting in along the stony shore,
And plunging in along the level sands,
And creeping in through creeks with swirling tides
And eddies. Yet from all the ceaseless flow
And tumult of the unresting element
Came neither shout of joy nor sob of grief,
For there were many waters, but no voice.

Silent the actors all on Nature's stage
Performed their parts before her watchful eyes,
Coming and going, making war and love,

Working and playing, all without a sound.
The oxen drew their load with swaying necks,
The kine came sauntering home along the lane,
The trooping sheep were driven from field to fold,
In mute obedience. Down the unseen track
The hounds, with panting sides and lolling tongues,
Pursued their flying prey with noiseless haste.
The birds, the most alive of living things,
The quickest to respond to joy and fear,
Found mates, and built their nests, and reared their young,
And waged their mimic strifes, and flashed athwart
Dark avenues of shade as sparks of light,
And over sunlit field as spots of shade;
They swam the flood of air like tiny ships
Rising and falling o'er invisible waves,
And, gathering in great navies, bore away
To North or South, without a note of song.

All these were Vera's playmates, and she loved
To watch them, wondering oftentimes how well
They knew their parts, and how the drama moved

So swiftly, smoothly on from scene to scene
Without confusion. But she sometimes dreamed
There must be something hidden in the play
Unknown to her, an utterance of life
More clear than action and more deep than looks.
And this she felt most surely when she watched
Her human comrades and the throngs of men.
They met and parted oft with moving lips
That seemed to mean far more than she could see.
No deed of anger or of tenderness
Could bring such sudden changes to the face,
Could work such magical effects in life,
As those same dumbly-moving lips. She saw
A lover bend above a maid beloved
With moving lips, and, though he touched her not,
Her cheeks bloomed roses and her eyes flashed light.
She saw a hater stand before his foe
And move his lips; whereat the other shrank
As if he had been smitten on the mouth.
She saw great regiments of toiling men

Marshalled in ranks and led by moving lips.
But once she saw a sight more strange than all:
A crowd of people sitting charmed and still
Around a little company of men
Who touched their hands in measured, rhythmic time
To curious instruments; a woman stood
Among them, with bright eyes and heaving breast,
And lifted up her face and moved her lips.
Then Vera wondered at the idle play,
But when she looked around, she saw the glow
Of deep delight on every face, and tears
Of tender joy in many eyes, as if
Some visitor from a celestial world
Had brought glad tidings. But to her alone
No angel entered, for the choir of sound
Was vacant in the temple of her soul.
And none could pass the gates called Beautiful.

So when, by vision baffled and perplexed,
She saw that all the world could not be seen,
And knew she could not know the whole of life
Unless the hidden gates should be unsealed,
She felt imprisoned. In her heart there grew

The bitter creeping plant of discontent,
The plant that only grows in prison soil,
Whose root is hunger and whose fruit is pain.
The springs of still delight and tranquil joy
Were drained as dry as desert dust to feed
That never-flowering vine, whose tendrils clung
With strangling touch round every bloom of life
And made it wither. Vera could not rest
Within the limits of her silent world;
Along its spoiled and desolate paths she roamed
A captive, looking everywhere for rescue.

In those long distant days, and in that land
Remote, there lived a Master wonderful,
Who knew the secret of all life, and could,
With gentle touches and with potent words,
Open all gates that ever had been sealed,
And loose all weary prisoners that were bound.
Obscure he dwelt, not in the wilderness,
But in a hut among the throngs of men,
Concealed by meekness and simplicity.
And ever as he walked the city streets,
Or sat in quietude beside the sea,
Or trod the hillsides and the harvest fields,

The multitude passed by and knew him not.
But there were some who knew, and turned to
him
For help; and unto all who asked, he gave.
Thus Vera came, and found him in the field,
And knew him by the pity in his face.
She knelt to him and held him by one hand,
And laid the other hand upon her lips
In mute entreaty. Then she lifted up
The coils of hair that hung about her neck
And bared the beauty of the gates of sound, —
Those virgin gates through which no voice had
passed, —
She made them bare before the Master's sight,
And looked into the kindness of his face
With eyes that spoke of all her prisoned pain,
And told her great desire without a word.

The Master waited long in silent thought,
Like one reluctant to bestow a gift,
Not for the sake of holding back the thing
Entreated, but because he surely knew
Of something better that he fain would give
If only she would ask it. Then he stooped
To Vera, smiling, touched her ears and spoke:

"Open, fair gates, and you, reluctant doors,
Within the ivory labyrinth of the ear,
Let fall the bar of silence and unfold!
Enter, you voices of all living things,
Enter the garden sealed, — but softly, slowly,
Not with a noise confused and broken tumult,—
Come in an order sweet as I command you,
And bring the double gift of speech and hearing."

Vera began to hear. And first the wind
Breathed a low prelude of the birth of sound,
As if an organ far away were touched
By unseen fingers; then the little stream
That hurried down the hillside, swept the harp
Of music into merry, tinkling notes:
And then the lark that poised above her head
On wings a-quiver, overflowed the air
With showers of song. Thus, one by one, the tones
Of all things living, in an order sweet,
Without confusion and with deepening power,
Entered the garden sealed. And last of all
The Master's voice, the human voice divine,
Passed through the gates and called her by her name,
And Vera heard.

II

What rapture of new life
Must come to one for whom a silent world
Is suddenly made vocal, and whose heart
By the same magic is awaked at once,
Without the learner's toil and long delay,
Out of a night of dumbly moving dreams,
Into a day that overflows with music!
This joy was Vera's; and to her it seemed
As if a new creative morn had risen
Upon the earth, and after the full week
When living things unfolded silently,
And after the long, quiet Sabbath day
When all was still, another week had dawned,
And through the calm expectancy of heaven
A secret voice had said, "Let all things speak."
The world responded with an instant joy;
And the untrodden avenues of sound
Were thronged with varying forms of viewless life.

To every living thing a voice was given
Distinct and personal. The forest trees
Were not more diverse in their shades of green
Than in their tones of speech; and every bird

That nested in their branches had a song
Unknown to other birds and all his own.
The waters spoke a hundred dialects
Of one great language; now with pattering fall
Of raindrops on the glistening leaves, and now
With steady roar of rivers rushing down
To meet the sea, and now with rhythmic throb
And measured tumult of tempestuous waves,
And now with lingering lisp of creeping tides, —
The manifold discourse of many waters.
But most of all the human voice was full
Of infinite variety, and ranged
Along the scale of life's experience
With changing tones, and notes both sweet and
sad,
All fitted to express some unseen thought,
Some vital motion of the hidden heart.
So Vera listened with her new-born sense,
To all the messengers that passed the gates,
In measureless delight and utter trust,
Believing that they brought a true report
From every living thing of its true life,
And hoping that at last they would make clear
The meaning and the mystery of the world.

But soon there came a trouble in her joy,
A cloud of doubt across her sky of trust,
A note discordant that dissolved the chord
And broke the bliss of hearing into pain.
Not from the harsher sounds and voices wild
Of anger and of anguish, that reveal
The secret strife in nature, and confess
The touch of sorrow on the heart of life,—
From these her trouble came not. For in these,
However sad, she felt the note of truth,
And truth, though sad, is always musical.
The raging of the tempest-ridden sea,
The crash of thunder, and the hollow moan
Of winds complaining round the mountain-
crags;
The shrill and quavering cry of birds of prey,
The fiercer voice of conflict-loving beasts,—
All these wild sounds are potent in their place
Within life's mighty symphony; the charm
Of truth attunes them, and the hearing ear
Finds pleasure in their rude sincerity.
Even the broken and tumultuous noise
That rises from great cities, where the heart
Of human toil is beating heavily
With ceaseless murmurs of the labouring pulse,

Is not a discord; fo
Of life unfeigned, a
And touched throug
With something re

Only one voice of a
One voice alone is
And hateful to the
The voice of falseh
This mocking voice
When first she le
speak
The thing that is n
Of simple trust wit
The joy of hearing
For now she felt th
Could pass the ope
Of sound, and bring
Or half a truth that
Or idle babble, neit
But hollow to the
She heard the flatte
That mask the hid
With fair attire of
And hide the evil i

The voices vain and decorous and smooth,
That fill the world with empty-hearted talk
And pass a worthless coin for gold, she heard.
The foolish voices, wandering and confused,
That cannot clearly speak the thing they would,
But ramble blindly round their true intent
And tangle sense in hopeless coils of sound, —
All these she heard, and with a sad mistrust
Began to doubt the value of her gift.
It seemed as if the world, the living world,
Sincere, and deep, and real, were still concealed,
Shut out by secret gates not yet unclosed,
And she, within the prison of her soul,
Still waiting silently to hear the voice
Of perfect knowledge and of perfect peace.

So with the burden of her discontent
She turned to seek the Master once again,
And found him sitting in the market-place,
Alone among the careless crowds of men,
Half-hidden in the shadow of a porch
And looking out with patient peaceful eyes
On the confusions of the noisy throng,
As one who sits beside a whirling stream
And watches it serenely: for he knows

The meaning of the tide, and whence it comes,
And where it flows.
Then Vera spoke to him:
"Thy gift was great, dear Master, and my heart
Has thanked thee many times for that first touch
That made the bar of silence fall, and let
The voices of all living things pass through
The gates of hearing to my prisoned soul.
But I have learned that hearing is not all
I need to make me understand the world.
For underneath the speech of men, there flows
Another current of their hidden thoughts.
The messengers of sound have not revealed
Life's secret to my heart; for oftentimes
They bring a false report, in treachery;
And oftentimes with vague and empty words
They mock my longing to receive the truth.
Behind the mask of language I perceive
The eyes of things unuttered; and I feel
The throbbing of the real heart of the world
Beneath the robe of words. Touch me again,
Dear Master, with thy liberating hand,
And free me from the bondage of deceit.

Open another gate, and let me hear,
Without confusion and with clearer sense,
The hidden thoughts and purposes of men;
For only thus my heart shall be at rest,
And only thus, at last, I shall perceive
The meaning and the mystery of the world."

The Master's face was turned away from her;
His eyes looked far away, as if he saw
Something beyond her sight; and yet she knew
That he was listening; for her pleading voice
No sooner ceased than he put forth his hand
To touch her brow, and very gently spoke,
With face averted, and with lingering words:
"Thou seekest for thyself a wondrous gift,—
The opening of the second gate,— a gift
That many wise men have desired in vain,—
But some have found it,—whether well or ill
For their own peace, they have attained the power
To hear unspoken thoughts of other men.
And thou hast begged this gift? Thou shalt receive,—
Not knowing what thou seekest,—it is thine:
The second gate is open! Thou shalt hear

All that men feel within their hidden hearts:
All thoughts that move behind the veil of words
Thou shalt perceive as clear as if they spoke.
The gift is granted, daughter, go thy way!
But if thou findest sorrow on this path,
Come back again, — there is a path to peace."

III

Beyond our power of vision, poets say,
There is another world of forms unseen,
Yet visible to purer eyes than ours.
And if the crystal of our sight were clear,
We should behold the mountain-slopes of cloud,
The moving meadows of the untilled sea,
The groves of twilight and the dales of dawn,
And every wide and lonely field of air,
More populous than cities, crowded close
With living creatures of all shapes and hues.
But if that sight were ours, the things that now
Engage our eyes would seem but dull and dim
Beside the splendours of our new-found world,
And we should be amazed and overwhelmed
Not knowing how to use the plenitude
Of vision. So in Vera's soul, at first,
The opening of the second gate of sound
Let in confusion like a dizzying flood.
The tumult of a myriad-throated mob;
The trampling of an army through a place
Where echoes hide; the sudden, clanging flight
Of an innumerable flock of birds
Along the highway of the midnight sky;

The many-whispered rustling of the reeds
Beneath the footsteps of a thousand winds;
The long-drawn, inarticulate, wailing cry
Of million-pebbled beaches when the scourge
Of white-lashed waves is curled across their back, —
All these seemed less bewildering than to hear
What now she heard at once: the tangled sound
Of all that moves within the minds of men.
For now there was no measured flow of words
To mark the time; nor any key of speech,
Though false, to bring a seeming harmony
Into the sound; nor any interval
Of silence to repose the listening ear.
But through the dead of night, and through the calm
Of weary noon-tide, through the solemn hush
That fills the temple in the pause of praise,
And through the breathless awe in rooms of death,
She heard the ceaseless motion and the stir
Of never-silent hearts, that fill the world
With interwoven thoughts of good and ill,
With mingled music of delight and grief,

With songs of love, and bitter cries of hate,
With hymns of faith, and dirges of despair,
And murmurs deeper and more vague than all, —
Thoughts that are born and die without a name,
Or rather, never die, but haunt the soul,
With sad persistence, till a name is given.
These Vera heard, at first with heart perplexed
And half-benumbed by the disordered sound.
But soon a clearer sense began to pierce
The cloudy turmoil with discerning power.
She learned to know the tones of human thought
As plainly as she knew the tones of speech.
She could divide the evil from the good,
Interpreting the language of the mind,
And tracing every feeling like a thread
Through all the mystic web that passion weaves
From heart to heart around the living world.
Then, — when at last the Master's second gift
Was perfected within her, and she heard
And understood the secret thoughts of men, —
Then sadness fell upon her, and the weight

Of an intolerable knowledge pressed her down
With weary wishes to know more, or less.
For all she knew was like a broken word
Inscribed upon the fragment of a ring;
And all she heard was like a troubled strain
Preluding music that is never played.

Then she remembered in her sad unrest,
The Master's parting word, — "a path to peace," —
And turned again to seek him with her grief.
She found him in a hollow of the hills
Beside a little spring that issued forth
From broken rocks and filled an emerald cup
With never-failing water. There he sat,
With waiting looks that welcomed her afar,
And smiling lips that gently bade her speak.
"I know that thou hast heard, my child," he said,
"For all the wonder of the world of sound
Is written in thy face. But hast thou heard,
Among the many voices, one of peace?
And is thy heart that hears the secret thoughts,
The hidden wishes and desires of men,
Content with hearing? Art thou satisfied?"

"Nay, Master," she replied, "thou knowest well
That I am not at rest, nor have I heard
The voice of perfect peace. For all I hear
Brings me disquiet and a troubled mind.
The evil voices in the souls of men,
Voices of rage and cruelty and fear
Have not dismayed me; for I have perceived
The voices of the good, the kind, the true
Are more in number and excel in strength.
There is more love than hate, more hope than fear,
In the mixed murmur of the human heart.
But while I listen to the mighty sound,
One thing torments me, and destroys my rest
And presses me with dull, unceasing pain.
For out of all the minds of all mankind,
And through all voices of unuttered thought,
There rises evermore a questioning voice
That asks the meaning of this widespread world
And finds no answer, — asks, and asks again,
With patient pleading or with wild complaint,
But wakens no response, except the sound
Of other questions, wandering to and fro,

From other souls in doubt. And this one
voice
Rises above all others that I hear,
And binds them up together into one,
Until the mingled murmur of the world
Sounds through the secret places of my heart
Like an eternal question, vainly asked,
By every human soul that thinks and feels,
And vainly echoed back, without reply.
This is the heaviness that weighs me down,
And this the pain that will not let me rest.
Therefore, dear Master, shut the gates again,
And let me live in silence as before!
Or else, — and if there is indeed a gate
Unopened yet, through which I might receive
An answer in the voice of perfect peace — "

She ceased; and in her upward faltering tone
The question echoed.
Then the Master said:
" There is another gate, not yet unclosed.
For through the outer portals of the ear
Only the outer voice of things may pass;
And through the middle doorways of the mind
Only the half-formed voice of human thoughts,

Uncertain and perplexed with endless doubt;
But through the inmost gate the spirit hears
The voice of that great Spirit who is Life.
Beneath the tones of living things, He breathes
A deeper tone than ever ear hath heard;
And underneath the troubled thoughts of men,
He thinks forever, and His thought is peace.
Behold, I touch thee once again, my child:
The third and last of those three hidden gates
That closed around thy soul and shut thee in,
Falls open now, and thou shalt truly hear."

Then Vera heard. The spiritual gate
Was opened softly as a full-blown flower
Unfolds its heart to welcome in the dawn,
And on her listening face there shone a light
Of still amazement and completed joy
In the full gift of hearing.
What she heard
I cannot tell; nor could she ever tell
In words; because all human words are vain;
There is no speech nor language to express
The secret messages of God, that make
Perpetual music in the hearing heart.
Below the voice of waters, and above

The wandering voice of winds, and underneath
The song of birds, and through all varying tones
Of living things that fill the world with sound,
God spoke to her, and all she heard was peace.

So when the Master questioned, "Dost thou hear?"
She answered, "Yea, at last I hear." And then
He asked her once again, "What hearest thou?
What means the voice of Life?" She answered, "Love!
For love is life, and they who do not love
Are not alive. But every soul that loves,
Lives in the heart of God and hears Him speak."

ANOTHER CHANCE

A LYRIC

FROM LIFE'S MONODRAMA

ANOTHER CHANCE

COME, give me back my life again, you heavy-
handed Death!
Uncrook your fingers from my throat, and let
me draw my breath.
You do me wrong to take me now — too soon
for me to die —
Ah, loose me from this clutching pain, and hear
the reason why.

I know I 've had my forty years, and wasted
every one;
And yet, I tell you honestly, my life is not begun;
I've walked the world like one asleep, a dreamer
in a trance;
But now you 've gripped me wide awake — I
want another chance.

My dreams were always beautiful, my thoughts
were high and fine;
No life was ever lived on earth to match those
dreams of mine.
And would you wreck them unfulfilled? What
folly, nay, what crime!
You rob the world, you waste a soul — give me
a little time.

You 'll hear me? Yes, I 'm sure you will, my
hope is not in vain:
I feel the even pulse of peace, the sweet relief
from pain;
The black fog rolls away from me; I 'm free
once more to plan:
Another chance is all I need to prove myself a
man.

. . . . . .

The world is full of warfare 'twixt the evil and
the good;
I watched the battle from afar as one that
understood
The shouting and confusion, the bloody, blun-
dering fight —
How few there are that see it clear, how few
that wage it right!

The captains flushed with foolish pride, the sol-
diers pale with fear,
The faltering flags, the feeble fire from ranks
that swerve and veer,
The wild mistakes, the dismal doubts, the cow-
ard hearts that flee —
The good cause needs a nobler knight to win the
victory.

A man whose soul is pure and strong, whose
sword is bright and keen,
Who knows the splendour of the fight and what
its issues mean;
Who never takes one step aside, nor halts,
though hope be dim,
But cleaves a pathway thro' the strife, and bids
men follow him.

No blot upon his stainless shield, no weakness
in his arm;
No sign of trembling in his face to break his
valor's charm:
One man like this could stay the flight and lead
the wavering line;
Ah, give me but a year of life — I'll make that
glory mine!

. . . . . .

Religion? Yes, I know it well; I've heard its
prayers and creeds,
And seen men put them all to shame with poor,
half-hearted deeds.
They follow Christ, but far away; they wander
and they doubt.
I'll serve him in a better way, and live his pre-
cepts out.

You see, I 've waited just for this; I could not
be content
To own a feeble, faltering faith with human
weakness blent.
Too many runners in the race move slowly,
stumble, fall;
But I will run so straight and swift I shall out-
strip them all.

Oh, think what it will mean to men, amid their
foolish strife,
To see the clear, unshadowed light of one true
Christian life,
Without a touch of selfishness, without a taint
of sin, —
With one short month of such a life a new world
would begin!

. . . . . .

And love! — I often dream of that — the treasure
of the earth;
How little they who use the coin have realized
its worth!
'T will pay all debts, enrich all hearts, and make
all joys secure.
But love, to do its perfect work, must be sincere
and pure.

My heart is full of virgin gold. I 'll pour it out
and spend
My hidden wealth, with lavish hand, on all who
call me friend.
Not one shall miss the kindly deed, the largess
of relief,
The generous fellowship of joy, the sympathy
of grief.

I 'll say the loyal, helpful things that make life
sweet and fair,
I 'll pay the gratitude I owe for human love and
care.
Perhaps I 've been at fault sometimes — I 'll ask
to be forgiven,
And make this very room of mine seem like a
little heaven.

For one by one I 'll call my friends to stand be-
side my bed ;
I 'll speak the true and tender words that I have
left unsaid ;
And every heart shall throb and glow, all cold-
ness melt away
Around my altar-fire of love — ah, give me but
one day !

. . . . . .

What's that? I've had another day, and
wasted it again?
A priceless day, in empty dreams, — another
chance in vain?
Thou fool — this night — it's very dark — the
last — this choking breath —
One prayer — have mercy on a dreamer's soul
— God, this is death.

SEVEN SMALL SONGS
IN DIFFERENT KEYS

THE ANGLER'S REVEILLE

WHAT time the rose of dawn is laid across
the lips of night,
And all the drowsy little stars have fallen asleep
in light;
'T is then a wandering wind awakes, and runs
from tree to tree,
And borrows words from all the birds to sound
the reveille.

This is the carol the Robin throws
Over the edge of the valley;
Listen how boldly it flows,
Sally on sally:

Tirra-lirra,
Down the river,
Laughing water
All a-quiver.
Day is near,
Clear, clear.
Fish are breaking,
Time for waking.
Tup, tup, tup!
Do you hear?
All clear—
Wake up!

The phantom flood of dreams has ebbed and
vanished with the dark,
And like a dove the heart forsakes the prison
of the ark;
Now forth she fares through friendly woods
and diamond-fields of dew,
While every voice cries out "Rejoice!" as if
the world were new.

This is the ballad the Bluebird sings,
Unto his mate replying,
Shaking the tune from his wings
While he is flying:

Surely, surely, surely,
Life is dear
Even here.
Blue above,
You to love,
Purely, purely, purely.

There 's wild azalea on the hill, and roses down
the dell,
And just one spray of lilac still abloom beside
the well;
The columbine adorns the rocks, the laurel buds
grow pink,
Along the stream white arums gleam, and vio-
lets bend to drink

This is the song of the Yellowthroat,
Fluttering gaily beside you;
Hear how each voluble note
Offers to guide you:

Which way, sir?
I say, sir,
Let me teach you,
I beseech you!
Are you wishing
Jolly fishing?
This way, sir!
I'll teach you.

Then come, my friend, forget your foes, and
leave your fears behind,
And wander forth to try your luck, with cheer-
ful, quiet mind;
For be your fortune great or small, you 'll take
what God may give,
And all the day your heart shall say, " 'T is luck
enough to live."

This is the song the Brown Thrush flings
Out of his thicket of roses;
Hark how it warbles and rings,
Mark how it closes:

Luck, luck,
What luck?
Good enough for me!
I'm alive, you see.
Sun shining,
No repining;
Never borrow
Idle sorrow;
Drop it!
Cover it up!
Hold your cup!
Joy will fill it,
Don't spill it,
Steady, be ready,
Good luck!

A BIT OF GOOD LUCK

MAY 4th, 1898. — To-day, fishing down the Swiftwater, I found Joseph Jefferson on a big rock in the middle of the brook, casting the fly for trout. He said he had fished this very stream three-and-forty years ago. Leaf from my Diary.

WE met on Nature's stage,
And May had set the scene,
With bishop-caps standing in delicate ranks,
And violets blossoming over the banks,
While the brook ran full between.

The waters rang your call,
With frolicsome waves a-twinkle, —
They 'd known you as boy, and they knew you as man,
And every wave, as it merrily ran,
Cried, " Enter Rip van Winkle ! "

A SLUMBER-SONG

FOR THE FISHERMAN'S CHILD

FURL your sail, my little boatie;
Here 's the haven, still and deep,
Where the dreaming tides, in-streaming,
Up the channel creep.
See, the sunset breeze is dying;
Hark, the plover, landward flying,
Softly down the twilight crying;
Come to anchor, little boatie,
In the port of Sleep.

Far away, my little boatie,
Roaring waves are white with foam;
Ships are striving, onward driving,
Day and night they roam.
Father 's at the deep-sea trawling,
In the darkness, rowing, hauling,
While the hungry winds are calling, —
God protect him, little boatie,
Bring him safely home!

Not for you, my little boatie,
Is the wide and weary sea;
You're too slender, and too tender,
You must rest with me.
All day long you have been straying
Up and down the shore and playing;
Come to port, make no delaying!
Day is over, little boatie,
Night falls suddenly.

Furl your sail, my little boatie,
Fold your wings, my tired dove.
Dews are sprinkling, stars are twinkling
Drowsily above.
Cease from sailing, cease from rowing;
Rock upon the dream-tide, knowing
Safely o'er your rest are glowing,
All the night, my little boatie,
Harbour-lights of love.

THE ECHO IN THE HEART

IT 'S little I can tell
About the birds in books;
And yet I know them well,
By their music and their looks:
When May comes down the lane,
Her airy lovers throng
To welcome her with song,
And follow in her train:
Each minstrel weaves his part
In that wild-flowery strain,
And I know them all again
By their echo in my heart.

It 's little that I care
About my darling's place
In books of beauty rare,
Or heraldries of race:
For when she steps in view,
It matters not to me
What her sweet type may be,
Of woman, old or new.
I can't explain the art;
But I know her for my own,
Because her lightest tone
Wakes an echo in my heart.

A NOVEMBER DAISY

AFTERTHOUGHT of summer's bloom!
Late arrival at the feast,
Coming when the songs have ceased
And the merry guests departed,
Leaving but an empty room,
Silence, solitude, and gloom!
Are you lonely, heavy-hearted;
You, the last of all your kind,
Nodding in the autumn wind;
Now that all your friends are flown,
Blooming late and all alone?

Nay, I wrong you, little flower,
Reading mournful mood of mine
In your looks, that give no sign
Of a spirit dark and cheerless:
You possess the heavenly power
That rejoices in the hour,
Glad, contented, free, and fearless,—
Lifts a sunny face to heaven
When a sunny day is given;
Makes a summer of its own,
Blooming late and all alone.

Once the daisies gold and white
Sea-like through the meadows rolled:
Once my heart could hardly hold
All its pleasures, — I remember,
In the flood of youth's delight
Separate joys were lost to sight.
That was summer! Now November
Sets the perfect flower apart;
Gives each blossom of the heart
Meaning, beauty, grace unknown, —
Blooming late and all alone.

THE RIVER OF DREAMS

THE river of dreams runs softly down
From its hidden spring in the forest of sleep,
With a measureless motion calm and deep;
And my boat slips out on the current brown,
In a tranquil bay where the trees incline
Far over the waves, and creepers twine
Far over the boughs, as if to steep
Their drowsy blooms in the stream, that goes,
By a secret way that no man knows,
Under the branches bending,
On through the shadows blending, —
While the body rests, and the passive soul
Is drifted along to an unseen goal,
And the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs smoothly down,
With a leisurely tide that bears my bark
Out of the visionless woods of dark,
Into a world where day-beams crown
Valley and hill with light from far,
Clearer than sun or moon or star.
Luminous, wonderful, weird, oh, mark
How the radiance pulses everywhere,
Through the lucent sky and the shadowless air!
Over the mountains shimmering,
Up from the fountains glimmering, —
'T is the mystical glow of the inner light,
That shines in the very noon of night,
Where the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs murmuring down,
Through the fairest garden that ever grew;
And I catch, as my boat goes drifting through,
A mingled music that seems to drown
The river's whisper, and charms my ear
With a sound I have often longed to hear,—
A magical harmony, strange and new,
A wild-rose ballad, a lilac-song,
A virginal chant from the lilies' throng,
Blue-bells silverly ringing,
Pansies merrily singing, —
For all the flowers have found their voice;
And I feel no wonder, but only rejoice,
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs broadening down,
Away from the peaceful garden-shore,
With a current that deepens more and more,
By the league-long walls of a mighty town.
I see the hurrying crowds of men
Dissolve like clouds and gather again,
But never a face I have seen before;
For they come and go, and they shift and change,
And even the forms and the dresses are strange:
This is a city haunted,
A multitude enchanted!
At the sight of the throng I am dumb with fear,
For never a sound from their lips I hear,
As the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs wildly down
Into the heart of a desolate land,
By ruined temples half-buried in sand,
Thro' a cleft of the hills, whose black brows frown
Over the shuddering, lonely wave,
While the air grows dim with the dust of the grave.
No sign of life on the dreary strand;
No ray of light on the mountain's crest;
And a weary wind that cannot rest
Comes down the valley creeping,
Lamenting, wailing, weeping, —
I strive to cry out, but my fluttering breath
Is choked with the clinging fog of death,
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs swiftly down,
Out of the valley of nameless fear,
Into a country calm and clear,
With a mystical name of high renown,—
A name that I know, but may not tell,—
And there the friends that I loved so well
The long-lost comrades, forever dear,
Come beckoning down to the river shore,
And hail my boat with the voice of yore.
Fair and sweet are the places
Where I see their unchanged faces!
And I feel in my heart with a secret thrill,
That the loved and lost are living still,
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs silently down
By a secret way that no man knows;
But the soul lives on while the dream-tide flows
Through the gardens bright, or the forests brown;
And I think sometimes that our whole life seems
To be more than half made up of dreams.
For its changing sights, and its passing shows,
And its morning hopes, and its midnight fears,
Are left behind with the vanished years.
Onward, with ceaseless motion,
The life-stream flows to the ocean, —
And we follow the tide, awake or asleep,
Till we see the dawn on Love's great deep,
When the bar at the harbour-mouth is crossed,
And the river of dreams in the sea is lost.

THE RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

I

WHERE 'S your kingdom, little king?
Where 's the land you call your own,
Where 's your palace, and your throne?
Fluttering lightly on the wing
Through the blossom-world of May,
Whither lies your royal way?
Where 's the realm that owns your sway,
Little king?

Far to northward lies a land,
Where the trees together stand
Closer than the blades of wheat,
When the summer is complete.
Like a robe the forests hide
Lonely vale and mountain side:
Balsam, hemlock, spruce and pine,—
All those mighty trees are mine.
There's a river flowing free;
All its waves belong to me.
There's a lake so clear and bright
Stars shine out of it all night,

And the rowan-berries red
Round it like a girdle spread.
Feasting plentiful and fine,
Air that cheers the heart like wine,
Royal pleasures by the score,
Wait for me in Labrador
There I'll build my dainty nest;
There I'll fix my court and rest;
There from dawn to dark I'll sing:
Happy kingdom! Lucky king!

II

Back again, my little king!
Is your happy kingdom lost
To that rebel knave, Jack Frost?
Have you felt the snow-flakes sting?
Autumn is a rude disrober:
Houseless, homeless in October,
Whither now? Your plight is sober,
Exiled king!

Far to southward lie the regions
Where my loyal flower-legions

Hold possession of the year,
Filling every month with cheer.
Christmas wakes the winter rose;
New Year daffodils unclose;
Yellow jasmine through the woods
Runs in March with golden floods,
Dropping from the tallest trees
Shining streams that never freeze.
Thither I must find my way.
Fly by night and feed by day,
Till I see the southern moon
Glistening on the broad lagoon,
Where the cypress' vivid green,
And the dark magnolia's sheen,
Weave a shelter round my home.
There the snow-storms never come:
There the bannered mosses gray
In the breezes gently sway,
Hanging low on every side
Round the covert where I hide.
There I hold my winter court,
Full of merriment and sport:
There I take my ease and sing:
Happy kingdom! Lucky king!

III

Little boaster, vagrant king!
Neither north nor south is yours:
You 've no kingdom that endures.
Wandering every fall and spring,
With your painted crown so slender,
And your talk of royal splendour
Must I call you a Pretender,
Landless king?

Never king by right divine
Ruled a richer realm than mine!
What are lands and golden crowns,
Armies, fortresses and towns,
Jewels, scepters, robes and rings, —
What are these to song and wings?
Everywhere that I can fly,
There I own the earth and sky;
Everywhere that I can sing,
There I 'm happy as a king.

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